

SPECIAL MEETING-MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
June 23, 2008

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the special meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Audrey P Beck Building

I. ROLL CALL

- Present: Duffy, Haddad, Koehn, Nesbitt, Paterson, Paulhus
Absent: Blair, Clouette, Schaefer

II. PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION

- 1. Mansfield Downtown Partnership, Storrs Center Project
Mayor Paterson announced that the evening's meeting was a continuation of the Special Meeting on June 12, 2008 and was an opportunity for the public to ask questions of the developers and members of the Downtown Partnership. Mayor Paterson, as requested, read the remarks of Betty Robinson and Martin Sommer into the record. Statements attached.

Joan Buck, 6 Sumner Drive, asked that the preliminary results of the Willimantic Water Study be distributed as soon as possible. Statement attached.

Martin Fox, 1 Storrs Heights Road, commented that Rte. 195 needs improvements especially in the Storrs Heights area. He also believes a viable downtown would increase our tax base and is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Frank Vasington, 172 Highland Road, spoke in support of the project and feels that the Storrs Center Project will give the area an identity of its own – independent of UConn.

Cindy Weiss, 58 Maxfelix Drive, requested clarification on the spread sheet distributed at the last meeting which itemized the contributions of the Town and the University to the project.

Joe Muro of Bolton commented that the changes to the Town over the years have been positive and this project could be the "crown jewel" of the region.

Betty Wassmundt, 54 Old Turnpike Road, asked about the sharing and legality of the relocation cost to move local businesses. Ms. Wassmundt also asked for a definition of "local" businesses and an explanation of Leyland Alliance's expenditures over the last 7 years.

Deputy Mayor Gregory Haddad arrived at 7:45 p.m.

Steve Bacon, 424 Wormwood Hill Road, commented that currently the Town depends on State funding for 43% of its total revenue and that property taxes make up 54% of the remainder. He stated it is important for the Town to explore other untapped revenue sources and asked Council members what initiatives, other than the Storrs Center Project, are underway.

Barry Schreier, 108 South Eagleville Road, commented that it became obvious to him as he was doing a national job search that Mansfield had no town. He would like to spend his money in Mansfield and urged the Council not to be shortsighted.

David Morse, 64 Birchwood Heights, commented that the evening's dialogue is important but feels that the reality is that there is not enough water for the project. He questioned whether or not the project is still relevant today and asked the Council to consider putting it "on ice" for a year until the results of the Willimantic River Study are in.

A J. Papanikou, 95 Birchwood Heights, spoke in support of the project and asked that all involved develop a level of trust with each other.

Janet Jones, 221 Wormwood Hill Road, stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission has looked at the details, the Town Council has approved the creation of the Downtown Partnership and it is now time to act.

David Freudmann, 22 Eastwood Road, stated downtown Storrs is what it is because that is what the market will bear. He feels the lack of a vibrant downtown is a market reality. Statement attached.

Dee Goodrich, 4 Westwood Road, spoke in favor of the project and feels the Town Council has been a good steward of the Town's money and is confident that the market for the Storrs Center does exist.

Tom Birkenholz, 108 South Eagleville Road, thanked the Council for all their work and expressed confidence in the process.

Curt Hirsch, 795 Stafford Road, commented that the Downtown Partnership is a major undertaking and a lot of work has already been completed. He feels the Town depends too heavily on PILOT funds and needs to take its future into its own hands. He is in support of the project.

Dolan Evanovich, 10 Westwood Road, spoke in support of the project. As Vice Provost of Enrollment at the University he has noticed that the ability to attract and retain qualified students is hindered by the lack of a town.

Kristin Schwab, 85 Willowbrook Road, commented that there have been opportunities for public input from the beginning and that concentrating development in one area of Town allows us to maintain the rural character of the rest. She encouraged the Council to think long term and continue to support the project. Statement attached

Gene Salorio, 17 Southwood Road, expressed grave reservations with the Town becoming involved with the funding of the project. He stated the Town should not commit itself to the garage prior to signed agreements and asked if there were any signed guarantees from the developer. He asked the Council to proceed carefully and not be in a rush to spend money.

Jay Rueckl, 128 South Eagleville Road, asked that a risk evaluation be done and

asked for evidence that this kind of public private partnership works.

Carol Pellegrine, 269 Clover Mill Road, asked a number of questions regarding the sale and or leasing of the properties, the plans for parking, the possibility of selling "shares" in the Downtown Partnership and expressed concern that Council members and Town employees serve on the Partnership Board. Ms. Pellegrine also read a statement from her husband, Richard. Mr. Pellegrine wrote that the project has gone overboard and that the development is out of touch with Mansfield and its way of life.

Ida Millman, 6B Sycamore Drive, commented that the project has imagination. Ms. Millman watched the development of Providence, Rhode Island and noted how successful it has been.

Mary Gawlicki, 132 Lorraine Drive East, asked for clarification regarding whether any private businesses have signed agreements. Ms Gawilicki also asked for details regarding the plans for the additional funding for the garage and examples of private/public partnerships. She also requested information on the market study when published.

Council members asked questions of the developers regarding phasing of the project, relocation plans, the management of rental units and the relocation plans and cost.

III. ADJOURNMENT

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Mr. Paulhus moved and Mr. Nesbitt seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth Paterson, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk.